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ABSTRACT

This in-progress program and resource study presents an actual case study in developing an alternative tc tenure. The College of St. Francis implemented during the 1979-80 academic year an alternative system, the Three Year Rolling Contract. It stated that all faculty members have academic freedom under any form of appointment; upon appointment as a full-time formal instructional faculty member, the new faculty member is eligible for a series of five, one-year contracts; following the fifth year of service, a faculty member is eligible for a three-year contract; a new three-year contract will be issued each year thereafter following a positive evaluation by the Rank and Promotion Committee; a faculty member has a year to remedy a negative report, but if the report remains negative at the end of the second year, the contract is terminated; if there is elimination or reduction of a program, the conditions of any contract remain in force; any faculty member has the right to appeal a negative evaluation; and the policies expressed affect formal instructional faculty only. The distinct advantage of this plan is the meaningful system of evaluation for all faculty members. It is suggested that a college or university can not only survive without tenure but can flourish, given an alternative plan and adequate reward system. (IC)

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OFFSETTING FACULTY AND INSTITUTIONAL INFLEXIBILITY: A CASE STUDY IN DEVELOPING AN ALTERNATIVE TO TENURE WITH REFERENCE TO FACULTY DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION

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ABSTRACT

This in-progress program and resource study presents an actual case study in developing an alternative to tenure. Since the topic of faculty retention systems cannot be discussed, and should not be discussed, without reference to faculty evaluation, the study also presents some information about these two faculty personnel practices. Since the Idea Marketplace sponsored by the Conference is an opportunity to present ideas to colleagues through informal discussion, displays and hand-outs, this paper only highlights typical elements of most research reports (bibliography, history, problem, conclusion and recommendations) and concentrates on the actual planning-developing-implementation process of the alternative system to tenure.

PROBLEM AND SIGNIFICANCE:

An estimated 94 percent of all faculty members in American colleges and universities are serving in institutions that grant tenure.[1] With tenure systems existing in almost 95 percent of the U.S. colleges and universities, the likelihood of infusing faculty and institutions with "new blood" and reinvigorating stagnant conditions diminishes. The best interests of collective and individual faculty and best interests of the institution may be threatened by anachronistic systems of traditional tenure. In his article, "The Poverty of Historicism: A Critique of Walter Metzger's Defense of Tenure,"[2] O'Toole lists four principle "costs" associated with tenure: immobility, impaired human growth, questionable quality, and related research costs (leading to production of the meretricious and the banal). He also asserts that tenure undercuts academic freedom. In the same monograph,[3] Glazer states that "it is fairly clear that tenure has become an overloaded concept ... endowed with so much weight that most institutions have not given serious thought to the concepts of academic freedom, professional growth, or meritocracy as separable from it -- until faced with crises." In sum, traditional tenure systems in colleges and universities have been subject to charges of encouraging faculty and institutional inflexibility while not insuring faculty security. The usual tenure system, often separated from systematic, objective and subjective, faculty evaluation and comprehensive development, could be inappropriate for the 1980's and 1990's. An alternative system, protecting both the best interests of the faculty and the institution is needed.

HISTORY AND BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Before any action, particularly planning, regarding alternative systems to tenure is undertaken by an institution, an extensive bibliographic instruction program should be initiated. Participation in this program of thorough research and reading should include every constituency of the institution: faculty, administration, students, alumni, trustees, and others. The literature is rich on this topic; bibliographies abound. I recommend highly the following:

a) C. Byse and L. Joughin, Tenure in American Higher Education (Ithaca, N.Y. Cornell University Press, 1959).
b) Commission of Academic Tenure in Higher Education, Faculty Tenure, (San Francisco, CA.: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1973).
c) F. C. Gerry, The Tenure Contract and Retrenchment of Academic Staff; An Outline and Review (Washington, DC: The Trend Report, Association of American Colleges, 1978) Vol. 1, No. 3, pp. 39-48.
d) T. J. Linnery, Alternatives to Tenure, Research Currents, (Washington, DC: AAHE-ERIC/Higher Education, March, 1979) p. 8 (the Bibliography attached).
e) Change Magazine, December, 1977, and October, 1978 issues (The various editiorials, letters to the editor, and "dialogues" are of popular interest.);
f) The AAHE monograph above.

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[1] W. T. Furniss, Faculty Tenure and Contract Systems - Current Practice, ACE Special Report (Washington, DC: American Council on Education, 1972), p.1.

[2] J. O'Toole, Current Issues in Higher Education 1979: Tenure (Washington, DC: American Association for Higher Education, 1979), pp. 13-14.

[3] P. M. Glazer, Current Issues in Higher Education 1979: Tenure (Washington, DC: American Association for Higher Education, 1979), p. 16.

BACKGROUND:

In 1974, owing to financial exigency, the Board of Trustees of the College of St. Francis in Joliet, Illinois, placed a moratorium on tenure. (Since this time, the College has significantly reversed its financial condition, created a substantial endowment, increased enrollments, and gained regional and national recognition for its accomplishments.) The issue was referred to governance and the academic affairs office for resolution. The issue remained unresolved, despite strong counsel from its accrediting body, until 1977 when the administration of academic affairs and faculty affairs changed, whereupon the new Vice President for Academic Affairs, in cooperation with the Division Chairpersons, and with the guidance provided by the President, took the following steps:

Process:

a) an intensive research and reference program was initiated to gather the most pertinent literature associated with tenure and alternative systems;
b) a bibliographic instruction program was established which involved all primary constituencies;
c) a sense of purpose, esprit d'corps, and respect for one another was developed and fostered among the Vice President for Academic Affairs, Division Chairpersons and the Director of the Three Year Program (Each of these individuals, all senior faculty, enjoyed the respect of the faculty.);
d) this group (constituting the leadership of academic affairs) identified the problem, i.e., it agreed that both the faculty and institution's best interests must be protected in the final disposition of the tenure issue;
e) the group also agreed, following lengthy consideration and discussion, that to reinstitute the traditional system of tenure did not respond to the faculty and institution's best interests;
f) similarly, the group agreed that whatever system was to be implemented must be done so within the context of a full-fledged illuminative and systematic faculty evaluation and development framework and that all three faculty personnel policies must be developed and presented simultaneously;
g) having examined several alternatives to tenure, it was agreed among the members of this small group to develop a proposal based upon a three year rolling contract plan;
h) the plan was informally introduced to several other significant faculty members "of like mind" for comment;
i) the ideas of these influential faculty members and a few administrators were incorporated;
j) a first draft of the proposed three year rolling contract system was developed;
k) in keeping with its basic assumptions, a philosophy of evaluation stressing faculty development was developed (this philosophy is contained in the faculty applicant's packet attached);
l) based on this philosophy, a draft application package for renewal of contract (one or three-year), merit, and promotion to a higher rank was prepared;
m) after these draft documents were prepared, the group researched, studied, and developed a four-part faculty development program (professional, instructional, personal and social, and organizational together with several advisory programs: see Faculty Handbook;
n) at the first meeting of the faculty scheduled for the academic year 1977-78, members of this group hosted and chaired all sessions of the faculty workshop; during this period the above comprehensive concepts were introduced;

o) during the first semester, a series of informal meetings with instructional faculty only were scheduled wherein the prepared documents were distributed and discussed; at each meeting, notes were taken and recommendations for revision were recorded;
p) the original group reassembled several times and revised the draft documents; this process of meetings and redrafting continued during the year;
q) meanwhile, the original group asked that collective faculty elect it as a slate to all positions on the Rank and Promotion Committee; this was done so as to commence the process which was emerging with personnel most acquainted with the proposals;
r) a Faculty Development committee was also re-invigorated and brought into the formative developments of the comprehensive alternative plan;
s) during this time, consultants were retained from national consulting networks and educational associations to complement the concepts, philosophy, ideas, and proposals of the expanded group;
t) one-on-one meetings or small group faculty meetings were essential for enlisting the support of faculty leaders; before long, most faculty wished to be associated with what was becoming a groundswell in favor of the draft documents; gradually more reluctant faculty were attracted to the "critical mass;"
u) the most important work of polishing the documents, especially the policy on the alternative to tenure or Three Year Rolling Contract Appointment, continued; outside assistance was sought, legal counsel was retained to clarify certain issues raised by the faculty, and the administration was consulted and informed;
v) in the Fall, 1978, the completed proposals were drafted as faculty personnel policies in the style of the current Faculty Handbook and were distributed, brought before governance, and adopted by an 85 percent vote of the entire Faculty Assembly; the representative governance similarly and unanimously approved the policies and forwarded them to the President for final action; upon his approval, the Board of Trustees was apprised and, after deliberation, approved the system and policies unanimously in the Spring, 1979.

Current Status:

From planning stages to final approval, the process continued for 23 months. The new system was implemented during the 1979-80 academic year and is now in its second year of implementation. To date no major revisions have been made in the policy, nor are any being discussed. Faculty satisfaction with the process, policies, and procedures remain high. Because of the centrality of faculty evaluation, the review procedure is time consuming for both applicant and colleague reviewer. This has caused some concern but it is rather slight. The system of evaluation will move from an overly systematic one substantiated by a wide variety of objective data to a more illuminative and subjective process as the system matures. The process of evaluation will also be streamlined in the near future as the need for intensive scrutiny diminishes. The Faculty Development Program has blossomed also (from a budget of $8,000 in 1977 to $24,000 currently) and now involves 80 percent of the faculty. For the last two years, the Faculty Development Committee has sponsored the actual position(s) of Coordinator of Instructional Development; these CID's work only on a voluntary confidential basis with faculty. This year the College implemented an alternative to the regular development and evaluation options by implementing two individual growth contracts. Many faculty have expressed interest in this

program. It should be noted that the new alternative to tenure system in no way negatively affected the search for or appointment of new faculty. In fact, with only one exception, each candidate appreciated it.

The Three Year Rolling Contract Appointment:

The policy as it actually appears in the current Faculty Handbook, Fifth Edition, follows:

a) Tenure

Before the moratorium was placed on tenure in 1974, tenure was granted to some faculty at the discretion of the Board of Trustees and the President. Their service shall be terminated only for retirement age or under extraordinary circumstances due to the College's financial exigencies, or for reasons stated in the Faculty Handbook. Those faculty currently holding tenure may choose to retain their tenure at CSF or may elect to participate in the Three Year Rolling Contract appointment. All tenured faculty are, nevertheless, obliged to participate in the annual evaluation process. This policy affects formal instructional faculty only.

b) Three Year Rolling Contract Appointment

1) All faculty members shall have academic freedom under any form of appointment. (Reference: Faculty Handbook, Academic Freedom).

2) Upon appointment as full-time formal instructional faculty member at CSF, the new faculty member shall be eligible for a series of five, one-year contracts. Following the fifth year of service at CSF, a faculty member is eligible for a three-year contract. (If, however, a faculty member had prior service on a full-time basis for five or more years in one or more academic institutions of higher education, he or she may, under extenuating circumstances, be considered for a three-year rolling contract after two years as assistant professor or higher at CSF). A new three-year contract will be issued each year thereafter following a positive evaluation by the Rank and Promotion Committee. If in any given year the evaluation is negative, the faculty member is not proferred a three-year contract and has another year in which to remedy his deficiencies. If the faculty member receives another negative evaluation at the end of the second year, the third year of the contract is terminal; if positive, the faculty member is awarded a new three-year contract.

3) If there is elimination or reduction of a program, the conditions of any contract remain in force and the College is obliged to keep its contractual obligations.

4) Any individual faculty member has the right to appeal a negative evaluation as outlined in the Faculty Handbook.

5) This policy affects formal instructional faculty only. (Approved: College Council, 1978-79; President and Board of Trustees, Spring, 1979.)

c) Evaluation

One of the keystones and distinct advantages of the contract system is a meaningful system of evaluation for all faculty members.

The Standing Rank and Promotion Committee of Faculty Assembly shall coordinate this process. It addresses itself to applications for promotion and renewal of contract for the formal instructional faculty. This committee shall follow the Procedures and Qualifications for Promotion as detailed in the Faculty Handbook.

d) Implementation -- The Three Year Rolling Contract system will be implemented during the 1979-80 academic year for contracts issued for the 1980-81 academic year.

Renewal Systems:

No set of faculty personnel policies is effective or survives unless it does so with a tangible and intangible reward system. Concurrent with the development and implementation of the processes noted above and of the extant policies, faculty salaries, at all levels, were intentionally improved. The College maintains both across-the-board and merit increases. Fringe benefits increased and faculty development funds were similarly augmented. Space, equipment, refurbishments, secretarial assistance, supplies, and similar faculty amenities were systematically reviewed and broadened. Other techniques such as judicious reduction of loads, summer stipends, honorariums, etc., were employed. Beyond this, administrators and colleagues are learning to say "thank you;" these intangible "strokes," recognitions, compliments and courtesies are not to be underemphasized.

Summary:

A college or university can not only survive without tenure but it can flourish. Faculty can be quite knowledgeable about written and unwritten expectations that an institution levies. They meet those expectations or they do not. Faculty members, not withstanding calamity, realize that job security and personal/professional growth can be realized by acknowledging these expectations or criteria and by "measuring up" to them. In doing so, they enhance the essence of a college, it's reputation and substance; meanwhile, each one can grow within this climate.

Tenure systems have served a purpose and for this higher education is richer. But given the times, the economy, the best interests of both faculty and college, the time may be now for an alternative system.

NOTE:

The policies on appointment, rank and promotion (including the application package and materials), faculty development and other related information is available upon request by contacting the presenter/author.